

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Claim 1 (previously presented): A method, in a messaging server, of connecting parties with mutual interests, comprising the steps of:

- providing a media object to be displayed to a first user;
- receiving a first comment from the first user;
- providing the media object to be displayed to a second user along with the first comment;
- receiving a reply comment from the second user wherein the first user and the second user are not connected to an instant messaging session; and
- if the reply comment fits a matching criteria, automatically connecting the first and the second user in an instant messaging system.

Claim 2 (original): The method of claim 1, wherein the matching criteria is in the form of an approval indication by the first user of the reply comment.

Claim 3 (original): The method of claim 1, wherein the media object includes one, or a combination, of a video clip, a graphic or a text object.

Claim 4 (previously presented): The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

- providing the media object and the first comment to a third user and subsequent users until a predetermined display count is reached;
- providing the first user with reply comments received from the third or subsequent users; and
- if any of the reply comments from the third or subsequent users are accepted by the first user, connecting the users having made acceptable reply comments to the instant messaging session.

Claims 5-6 (cancelled)

Claim 7 (original): The method of claim 4, wherein the predetermined display count is a function of a parameter settable by the first user.

Claim 8 (original): The method of claim 1, wherein a plurality of media objects are associated with nodes in a hierarchical topic network and comments accepted are associated with the nodes.

Claim 9 (original): The method of claim 8, further comprising the steps of:
accepting an association from the first user associating the first comment with one of the nodes; and
presenting users' subsets of comments that are associated with a subset of the nodes.

Claim 10 (original): The method of claim 9, further comprising a step of limiting the subset of nodes to one parent node and the nodes that are descendants of the one parent node.

Claim 11 (original): The method of claim 1, wherein a plurality of media objects are associated with a concept, and wherein comments accepted are associated with one of the concept and a specific one of the plurality of media objects.

Claim 12 (currently amended): A method, in a messaging server, of connecting parties with mutual interests, comprising the steps of:
providing a media object for display to a plurality of users;
receiving a first comment from a first [[one]]user of the plurality users;
providing the media object and the first comment for display to a second user of the plurality of users;
~~receiving a reply comment from the second [[one]]user of the plurality of users;~~
providing the reply comment to the first user wherein the first user and the second user are not in an instant messaging session; and
automatically connecting the first and the second user in an instant messaging session if the first user indicates approval of the reply comment.

Claim 13 (original): The method of claim 12, wherein the media object includes one, or a combination, of a video clip, an audio clip, a graphic or a text object.

Claim 14 (previously presented): The method of claim 12, further comprising the steps of:

providing the media object and the first comment to a third user and subsequent users until a predetermined display count is reached;

providing the first user with reply comments received from the third or subsequent users; and

if any of the reply comments from the third or subsequent users are accepted by the first user, connecting the users having made acceptable reply comments to the instant messaging session.

Claims 15-16 (cancelled)

Claim 17 (original): The method of claim 14, wherein the predetermined display count is a function of a parameter settable by the first user.

Claim 18 (original): The method of claim 12, wherein a plurality of media objects are associated with nodes in a hierarchical topic network and comments accepted are associated with the nodes.

Claim 19 (original): The method of claim 18, further comprising the steps of:
accepting an association from the first user associating the first comment with one of the nodes; and
presenting users' subsets of comments that are associated with a subset of the nodes.

Claim 20 (original): The method of claim 19, further comprising a step of limiting the subset of nodes to one parent node and the nodes that are descendants of the one parent node.

Claim 21 (original): The method of claim 12, wherein a plurality of media objects are associated with a concept, and wherein comments accepted are associated with one of the concept and a specific one of the plurality of media objects.

Claim 22 (original): The method of claim 12, wherein the media object includes a link to the first comment.

Claim 23 (original): The method of claim 22, further comprising the step of the second user selecting the link, wherein selection of the link provides a list of one or more comments including the first comment.

Claim 24 (previously presented): A method, in a messaging server, of connecting parties with mutual interests, comprising the steps of:

- providing a media object for display to a plurality of users;
- receiving a first comment from a first one of the plurality of users;
- providing the media object and a link to the first comment for display to the plurality of users;
- receiving a reply comment from the second one of the plurality of users in response to the first comment;
- providing the reply comment to the first user wherein the first user and the second user are not in an instant messaging session; and
- automatically connecting the first and the second user in an instant messaging session if the first user indicates approval of the reply comment.

Claim 25 (original): The method of claim 24, further comprising the step of the second user selecting the link, wherein selection of the link provides a list of one or more comments including the first comment.

Claim 26 (cancelled)

Claim 27 (original): The method of claim 24, further including the step of providing the first comment to the second user in response to a search inquiry entered by the second user.

Claim 28 (original): The method of claim 27, wherein the search inquiry is a keyword search.